

Jewish people rejected their Servant-Messiah their rebellion eventuated in the Roman holocaust. The sorrow of the Jew has been unceasing. He can never find happiness until he "obeys the voice of the Servant."

QUIZ

1. Why does this verse preclude the possibility of national Israel being the "Servant"?
2. How may Israel of Isaiah's day obey the voice of the Servant?
3. Why is rebellion self-destructive?
4. How did the rebellion of the Jews against the Servant lead to their sorrow?

3. RULE, CHAPTER 51

a. TURN TO JUSTICE

TEXT: 51:1-8

- 1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah: look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.
- 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many.
- 3 For Jehovah hath comforted Zion; he hath comforted all her waste places, and hath made her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Jehovah; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.
- 4 Attend unto me, O my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall go forth from me, and I will establish my justice for a light of the peoples.
- 5 My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the peoples; the isles shall wait for me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

- 6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.
- 7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye dismayed at their revilings.
- 8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation unto all generations.

QUERIES

- a. Why look unto Abraham and Sarah?
- b. Is the garden of Eden to be reestablished on earth?
- c. How could anyone have the law of God in their heart before Christ?

PARAPHRASE

Listen to Me, you small and fearful remnant: If you are truly seeking to know Jehovah and wanting His way of life, look unto the character of your ancestors Abraham and Sarah—that is where you will find an example of what you seek. I called this one man, Abraham, and he responded in faith and obedience. I delivered him from all that opposed him and made of him a great nation. Now Jehovah has promised to deliver and strengthen true Zion, a small remnant though she may be. He has promised to change Zion's despair and destitution into a salvation that will restore the fellowship between Him and man which was present in Eden. True joy and thanksgiving will abound when this has come to pass. Listen to Me, O My people: I am going to send into the world the final and full expression of My will and it will be a revelation to the Gentiles

as well, to bring them to salvation. This is near—it is as good as done. When it comes to fulfillment (and it is beginning now), it will be both salvation and judgment; salvation for all (even Gentiles) who trust in Me, and judgment upon those who reject My will. Study the universe: both the heavens and the earth are doomed to disintegration and dissolution. All humanity likewise is dying. But what I will and what I work shall endure forever. Listen to Me, you who have allowed My will to rule your mind and heart so that you are doing right: Do not fear the threats of human beings, no matter how powerful they may appear to be. They will all be consumed and disappear like a garment eaten by moths, but My righteousness and salvation will endure forever.

COMMENTS

v. 1-5 ESTABLISHED: This chapter predicts the coming of Jehovah's rule of justice through His law. It is, of course, an integral part of the whole section discussing *Salvation Through God's Servant* (ch. 40-53). Thus we are to understand Jehovah's predicted rule of justice will be through the coming Servant. This chapter is a special message to that small remnant of true believers contemporary with Isaiah. They are designated "ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah." The majority of people in Isaiah's day did not follow after righteousness. And even the remnant which did was sorely tempted to give up all hope. In view of the depraved morality and hypocritical religiosity of most of Israel and in view of the dreadful predictions of the true prophets of God that Babylonian captivity was near, the remnant must be encouraged. This remnant was sincere in its search for righteousness. The Hebrew word *rodephey* is translated *follow after* in the ASV, but is stronger and more properly translated *pursue* as in the RSV. There was not much righteousness to be found among this nation. They were a people "laden with iniquity" (Isa. 1:4, etc.). Only a few "disciples" of Isaiah (Isa. 8:16) desired real justice and the

rule of Jehovah. The Lord encourages them to believe that He will establish His rule of justice by directing them to look backward to what He did through Abraham and to look forward to what He promises to do in the future. To the tiny remnant of Isaiah's disciples it may appear impossible that Jehovah's rule of justice will ever be established. However, Jehovah is able to do the impossible! Let the remnant look back to the "rock from which" the nation was hewn—Abraham—and the "hole of the pit" from which it was digged—Sarah. That Jehovah could produce a nation of many people from one man and woman who were past the age of child-bearing was thought impossible. Nevertheless, from one lone sojourner who had a wife whose womb was barren and who was beyond the age of bearing children and who bore only one child, God produced a nation. Of course, Jehovah could not have done it without the faith of Abraham and Sarah (cf. Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:6-9; 4:21-27; Heb. 11:8-12; Heb. 11:17-22; James 2:18-26). This is the point. God is able to save this remnant and through them establish His rule of justice, but they must be people of steadfast faith like their forefather Abraham. Through one man, Abraham, and through the one son of Abraham, Isaac, God formed a people for Himself. But this people rejected His rule. Through the one "Seed" (Christ) of Abraham, Jehovah will produce a new Israel who will submit to His rule (cf. Gal. 3:15-29; 6:13-16). Isaiah's "remnant" must believe even though they may not receive what is promised; they must see it and greet it from afar (cf. Heb. 11:13-16). A remnant must be preserved through which the Messiah-Servant may come and establish the rule of Jehovah's justice (cf. Isa. 9:7; 11:1-9, etc.).

Jehovah's *comforting* of Zion will reach its culmination in the coming Servant (cf. comments Isa. 40:1-11; 49:13). Verse three is in the "predictive present." What Jehovah will do through the Servant is so certain it may be spoken of by Him as having already been accomplished! When the Servant finishes comforting Zion, all Zion's spiritual desolation and moral destitution will be turned into a righteousness that will

be like Eden restored. The prophet is not here intending that the land of Palestine shall be physically restored to the flora and fauna of pre-fallen Eden. This world is destined (including Palestine) for destruction (cf. II Pet. 3:1-13). The prophet is speaking of a restoration of spiritual paradise; a restored Zion over which Jehovah rules in righteousness and justice, in which there shall be joy and gladness (see comments Isa. 35:8-10).

Jehovah will comfort Zion through a rule of *torah* (law). This is not the law of Moses in commandments and ordinances which "stood against us" (Col. 2:13-15). No man could be justified by that law (cf. Gal. 3:10-14; 5:1-6). This is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (cf. Rom. 8:1-17). Young calls it, "in particular . . . the law of faith, given 'by the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith' (Rom. 16:26)." It is that final and full revelation of the will of God for man's salvation which also sets before man what God requires of him. It is the same going forth of His law as predicted in Isaiah 2:1-4. This rule of Jehovah through the law of the Servant will provide light for all people (cf. comments on Isa. 9:1ff).

The Lord's righteousness is *near*. Near is relative to God's perspective! All time is as one day with Jehovah. When He declares a thing, it is as good as done. He will begin His great work toward this coming of the Servant with the Babylonian captivity and release from it through Cyrus. Israel may know Jehovah's salvation is on its way when they see Him "judge" the peoples by His arm. When these great empires fall and Israel continues to survive she may know that His salvation is so certain it may be said to be *near* (Heb. 11:13-16). For a discussion of the meaning of "isles" see comments on 41:1ff.

v. 6-8 ENDURING: What seems as if it will go on and on, unalterably fixed and sure (the heavens and the earth) will one day vanish. Even the perpetuity of the human race *seems* assured. But it too will expire. Only that which is saved by Jehovah will endure forever. What is declared *right* (His righteousness) by Jehovah is eternal because that is truth. Anything declared *not right* by Jehovah will perish. And how does

man know what God declares right?—by hearkening unto God's law! And what is this law which is in the heart?—it is the law of Christ, the law of faith which was in the heart of Abraham and by which he was justified (cf. Rom. 4:1-25). It is the will of God concerning redemption through the Servant (cf. Isa. 42:1-4)—the Servants law. That this law (or will) of God concerning future salvation through an atoning Servant was written on the hearts of some before Christ was born is evidenced by Abraham rejoicing to see Christ's day (Jn. 8:56), Isaiah seeing the glory of the Christ (Jn. 12:41), the prophets inquiring about Him (I Pet. 1:10-12) and from all the faithful in Hebrews, chapter 11. The prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34 does not exclude every Jew of the Old Testament dispensation from the capacity to have God's law written on their heart through faith. If that should be the case, it would contradict Romans 4, et al. The Jeremiah 31 passage, taken in harmony with this passage in Isaiah, seems to say that out of a *small* remnant of O.T. saints who believe God's promises about an atoning Servant (the law of Jehovah about the Servant "written on their hearts"), Jehovah is going to form a new covenant people who will be covenant people *only* because they have His law written on their hearts and not because they were physically born to a particular nationality. In other words, there was a nucleus of people in the O.T. with Jehovah's will (law) written on their hearts and they were justified, in prospect, by their faith. When the Servant came and fulfilled the predicted atonement, these O.T. believers were justified in fact (cf. Heb. 9:15-16). The message of God expressed in all the sacrifices and offerings and in all the prophecies of the suffering Servant was that man could not atone for his sins by any works—God alone could provide atonement. Now when the O.T. believer *took that to heart*, with the moral and doctrinal implications it had for his life, then he had the law of God written on his heart! The goal of all this is, of course, the New Testament dispensation. Without that goal the faith of the O.T. believer could not have justified him. If the Servant had not come and accomplished the atonement which was typified

and prophesied there could have been no law of God written on any heart either before the fact or after. The N.T. covenant is enacted upon better promises because it is after the fact of the Servant's work.

Those who have the law of faith written on their hearts do not need to fear the threats of those who stand in opposition to the rule of Jehovah's Servant. Those who stand for the rule of the Servant will always be in the minority. Those who stand against the rule of the Servant will always be in the majority and will control all the resources of human power. But Jehovah has revealed historically that He is more powerful than all human power put together. His righteousness (what He declares right) will endure every opposition. There may be those of ethnic Israel who do not want to know that what God says is right (cf. Isa. 30:9-11), but those who are true Israel do not need to fear for what God says is right and will last forever.

QUIZ

1. What is "following" after righteousness?
2. What relationship does Abraham have to the needs of Isaiah's audience?
3. How will Jehovah comfort Zion?
4. What is the law that goes forth from Jehovah?
5. How is the Lord's salvation near?
6. How may we say some of the people of Isaiah's day had the law of God written on their hearts?
7. How are they to know the righteousness of God can withstand all opposition and endure forever?

b. TRUST IN JEHOVAH

TEXT: 51:9-16

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Is

- it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the monster?
- 10 Is it not thou that driedst up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that madest the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?
- 11 And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- 12 I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass;
- 13 and hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and feareth continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he maketh ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?
- 14 The captive exile shall speedily be loosed; and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail.
- 15 For I am Jehovah thy God, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar: Jehovah of hosts is his name.
- 16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

QUERIES

- a. Does Jehovah have to be awakened?
- b. Who is the captive exile?
- c. Into whose mouth has Jehovah put his words?

PARAPHRASE

Help! Help! Come forth to help us girded with power as You did for our ancestors in olden times, O Lord. Did You

not slay the "Big Mouth" dragon, Egypt? Did You not dry up a path through the great Red Sea for Your people to walk across and escape from Egyptian slavery? You have promised: Those whom the Lord purchases with a ransom-price will return to Him and to Zion rejoicing with songs about their redemption. Everlasting joy will crown their whole lives. They shall finally find the refreshment of their souls for which they have longed. All that would frustrate or hinder their travel will be made to disappear. Jehovah answers: Yes, I, the same God who delivered your ancestors, Am the God who is coming forth to deliver you. What kind of people are you that are so afraid of human beings? Mortal man is no more enduring than the grass of the field! Have you forgotten Jehovah, your Maker, who spread the stars through the skies and brought the earth into existence? Are you in constant dread of the oppressions of men? Are you paralyzed with terror at the anger of your enemies. Soon Zion shall be set free; dungeon, starvation and death are not going to put an end to Zion. Remember, I am Jehovah, your God, Lord of all creation. I control the sea and everything else. Zion's deliverance will be revealed and accomplished through My Servant, for I have put my words in His mouth and I protect Him with My mighty hand. Through Him I will make a whole new creation, a new Zion, who shall truly be My people.

COMMENTS

v. 9-11 PLEA: The Hebrew words *'uriy 'uriy* (Awake, awake) do not mean to convey that Isaiah thought God had fallen asleep. The word is also used in Dan. 4:10, 14, 20 and translated, *watcher*. The idea of the word is *watchfulness, alertness* or *awareness*, that motivates action. In view of the impending Babylonian captivity, the prophet is calling upon the Lord to act on behalf of the small minority of believers and save Zion. God has promised protection from Babylon, but God has not acted. Men, even prophets, often run ahead of the Lord. Isaiah

is representing the remnant, of course, and they are expressing their terror at the threats of Babylon. It appears from their fearful perspective as if God is either unaware of their plight or is aware but is not intending to do anything about it. Their appeal for action is based on what they know of His previous deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Their ancient writings tell of Moses' and Israel's passage from slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea. Egypt is called "Rahab" (which means "loud mouth" in Hebrew; see 30:7) and *thanniyn* "the monster"; *thanniyn* is translated *serpent* in most uses (cf. 27:1). Jehovah delivered from the dragon Egypt, will He now allow Zion to be destroyed by the lion Babylon? The sea which was dried up must refer to the Red Sea crossing (Ex. 14:1ff).

Verse 11 forms an excellent conclusion to Isaiah's plea. It is a quotation, almost letter for letter, from 35:10 which likewise forms a conclusion to a messianic section. Isaiah quotes himself (and why not, since it was such a beautiful and emphatic promise of God the first time it was spoken) as part of his pleas as if to remind Jehovah of His recently promised redemption; see comments 35:8-10.

v. 12-16 PROMISE: Jehovah answers the plea of Isaiah and the remnant by affirming that He is indeed that same Jehovah who kept His covenant with Israel and delivered them from Egypt. The "I, even I . . ." appears to be a retort in irony to "awake, awake." Jehovah is who He is and will always be the same. What the remnant needs is to find its own identity. And that is the interesting thing here; the remnant's identity is to be found in who Jehovah is! In other words, if Jehovah is always the same, then who are those who believe and trust in Him? They are those who need not fear mortal men. The same truth is relevant for today. Men and women can only find their true identity in relationship to their commitment to God. If they trust Him and follow Him, they are invincible; He will save them from all that threatens. If they do not trust Him and do not follow Him they will be lost. The fundamental identification of man is his savedness or his lostness! That is who he is! When man forgets his Maker—when man forgets that he is creature

and Jehovah is Creator—he is a slave to fear and falsehood. When man forgets his Creator his whole perspective is warped. Anyone who searches for self-identity without first knowing who God is (and all that such knowledge of Him implies) searches in vain! If the remnant of Isaiah's day remembers its Maker, it will be freed from fear of its enemies.

The Hebrew word *tzo'eh* means "to bend down; to stoop" as though burdened down and is translated "he who is bowed down" in the RSV. It is predicting the circumstances of the Babylonian exiles being "bowed down" in chains or in prisons. Zion (the remnant of believers; disciples of Isaiah) may have to go into captivity but she shall "speedily" be released (70 years). Most assuredly, Jehovah does not intend Zion's ultimate destiny to be imprisonment, starvation and death! She will suffer chastening but Jehovah will work through her to create a new Zion.

The final word of Jehovah (v. 16) is manifestly addressed to the Servant because it shall be particularly through the Servant that Jehovah creates the new, ultimate Zion (cf. Heb. 12:22). Jehovah reaffirms His promise (cf. 50:4-11) that the Servant will be sent with the incarnate word of the Lord ("my words in thy mouth"). The special, intimate, divine companionship to the Servant is also reiterated ("covered thee in the shadow of my hand"). Jehovah will "plant" and "lay the foundations" and "say unto Zion. Thou art my people." Some commentators think this refers to the creation of a new heavens and earth, or a new cosmos, after the present one is destroyed by fire (as per II Pet. 3, etc.). That may be the ultimate outcome of the "new creation" ushered in by the Messiah at His first coming, but we believe Isaiah is not really focusing on the end of the messianic age but on the beginning of it. The messianic age is often pictured as a "new creation" of Zion (cf. Isa. 66:22-24; II Cor. 5:16-21, etc.). The Zion of the N.T. was created after the "removal of what is shaken" (Heb. 12:25-29). The old "creation" (Judaism) was shaken down and the new "creation" (Christianity) remains and cannot be shaken. The abrogation of the old dispensation and the creation of a new

dispensation (especially a dispensation which would include Gentiles in God's covenant) would not be possible in Jewish thinking without a whole new creation (new heavens and earth)! The prophet figuratively accommodates his language to the Jewish thought-pattern. Of course, God did not intend to create a new physical heaven and earth when He sent the Servant on His first advent. And this is one of the major causes of Jewish rejection of the Messiah! They could not adjust their thought-patterns to the reality of the revelation that Jesus was the Christ and that He came to form a spiritual kingdom in this present earth and not to form a political kingdom in a rejuvenated physical earth! Certainly, God will one day destroy this present cosmos and create a new one. But mankind must be reborn and accept citizenship in a newly created Zion before he is ready for the new cosmos. The Jew, as well as the Gentile, must become a new creature first. Toward this first goal the prophets primarily pointed! "Thou art my people" is definitely a messianic term (cf. Hosea 1:10-11; 2:16-23; Rom. 9:23-33; I Pet. 2:9-10).

In the light of so much contemporary emphasis on personal subjectivism and feeling as criteria for proper relationship to God, it is important to notice in this chapter thus far the criterion for proper relationship to God is the objective revelation of His nature. Man's relationship to God is properly built on who God is—not on how man feels. And God has objectively demonstrated—in historical deeds—that He is absolutely powerful and absolutely faithful. Isaiah's contemporaries are exhorted to look back at what Jehovah has done; look now at what He is doing; and look forward to what He promises to do. They are never asked, what do you think He ought to do, or, What is He doing to your feelings!

QUIZ

1. What does Isaiah mean when he cries to Jehovah, "awake, awake"?

2. What event in Israel's history is appealed to in reference to the "sea"?
3. Why can man only find out who he is when he finds out who God is?
4. Why will God not leave the exiles to starve and die?
5. Why do we think God is addressing the Servant in verse 16?
6. What are the "heavens and . . . earth" God is going to plant?
7. Why did the Jews think the "heavens and . . . earth" would have to be physical?
8. What criterion of man-to-God relationship is appealed to in this chapter?

c. TORMENTORS JUDGED

TEXT: 51:17-23

- 17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, that hast drunk at the hand of Jehovah the cup of his wrath; thou hast drunken the bowl of the cup of staggering, and drained it.
- 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand among all the sons that she hath brought up.
- 19 These two things are befallen thee; who shall bemoan thee? desolation and destruction, and the famine and the sword; how shall I comfort thee?
- 20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God.
- 21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:
- 22 thus saith thy Lord Jehovah, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of staggering, even the bowl of the cup of my wrath; thou shalt no more drink it again:
- 23 and I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee,

that have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy back as the ground, and as the street, to them that go over.

QUERIES

- a. When did Jerusalem drink the cup of Jehovah's wrath?
- b. Why was there none to guide her among her sons?
- c. Who made her "bown down" and where did they "go over"?

PARAPHRASE

Attention! Be alert, Zion! You will soon drink of the cup of Jehovah's punishment. You will have drained every drop; you will have been made to reel under your punishment. You must now decide what course you shall take. You cannot depend on any of this generation of Israelites to take spiritual leadership of Zion. None of them are capable of stopping the desolation and destruction that is coming upon you. Starvation and war and captivity is coming and how will I, Jehovah, save you? Your young men, in whom you hope for leadership, have collapsed everywhere from spiritual and moral weakness. They are as helpless as deer caught in a hunter's net. They shall feel the full force of the Lord's wrath. On account of this, you suffering people of Zion, you shall reel under the Lord's punishment but the Lord your God will defend you. You can believe this: I will take the cup of staggering punishment out of your hand. You will not drink from My wrath-filled cup again when I comfort you through My Servant. I will put that cup of judgment in the hand of your tormentors. Those who have forced Zion to surrender to the chains of captivity and those who have oppressed and trampled her, body and soul, into the dust—they shall stagger under My judgment.

COMMENTS

v. 17-20 STAGGERED: Again, this is Servant-centered. And again, we have the prophet predicting the captivity of Zion, her release, and out of that the ultimate comforting of Jehovah in the coming Servant. Jerusalem (Zion) is roused to wakefulness to prepare herself for the coming "cup" of God's wrath (cf. Jer. 25:15-29; Ezek. 23:31-35); Zion will drink the whole cup Jehovah has for her—exile into a pagan land. Her walls and her temple will be leveled to the ground by a pagan people. The sacred vessels will be desecrated and carried away. Her people will be marched away in chains like slaves. They will be utterly cut off from Jehovah without a temple or a priesthood, unable to offer sacrifices or be ritually cleansed. This would be "staggering" to a Jew. The religious-psychological-moral shock would be more staggering than the physical suffering. People can endure great physical privation when they know they are not suffering the disfavor of God.

Zion is to learn something from this "cup of staggering." She is to alert herself to the fact that only Jehovah can deliver her from the fix she has gotten herself into. None of Jerusalem's wise old men could rescue her from the consequences of her sins. None of Jerusalem's bright young men had the capability to step forward and deliver her from the coming ruin. In fact, those who were capable of leadership had become so self-centered and cynical they did not even *want* to become involved with civic mindedness (cf. Isa. 3:6-12; 4:1, etc.). Jerusalem is headed for desolation, destruction, starvation and slaughter; who will rescue the remnant of Zion? Jehovah asks the rhetorical question, "How shall I comfort thee?" If there are no "sons" of Jerusalem through whom Jehovah may work, what shall be the instrument of His salvation? All the "sons" of Jerusalem are as helpless as the antelope caught in the hunter's net. The Hebrew word *toa* is translated *oryx* (Gr.) in the LXX and *wild bull* in the KJV. It is probably the *dorcass gazelle*, common to Syria, Palestine and Arabia, or the *oryx beatrix* (Arabian oryx). The Hebrew root word, *tha'ah*, means

literally, "to outrun," thus signifying the antelope-gazelle animal which is extremely fast but physically weak. The men Jerusalem expected to be leaders and deliverers will become victims like everyone else. They too have drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath dry. They have imbibed of the same heady wine of rebellion and moral corruption in which the populace has indulged. Now they will all stagger and reel. How shall Zion be delivered?

v. 21-23 SAVED: The word "therefore" is meant to be understood, "on account of this . . ." On account of Zion's inability to save herself, Jehovah will "plead her case." (the Hebrew word *riyv* is a term of the court; cf. 45:9; 49:25; 50:8). When the proper time comes, Jehovah the judge will discontinue Zion's punishment and give the cup she was drinking into the hand of her enemies. Undoubtedly this refers initially to the deliverance from Babylonian exile. This great event is predicted over and over by Isaiah (and other prophets). It will begin in the days of Cyrus, ruler of the Persian empire. But almost always, wherever the return from the captivity is predicted, it is pointed to as the initial step in a glorious program of redemption which shall culminate in the messianic age. Jehovah certainly did not *literally* take away Jerusalem's "cup of staggering" with the return from exile. Jerusalem suffered severe physical warfare under the Seleucids and the Romans (predicted in Daniel). There are two possible interpretations of the phrase "thou shalt no more drink it again": (a) The removal of the cup was to be conditional. Jerusalem would never stagger again after the captivity as long as she remained true to Jehovah. She did not remain true as evidenced by Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and as evidenced by her murdering of the Messiah, so Jerusalem was given the cup of staggering again; or (b) the promise is to Zion, the true Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that is above (pre-eminent, cf. Gal. 4:26), the messianic kingdom, the church. The true people of God, the born-again kingdom, shall never suffer being cut off from the presence of God as were the Jews of the exile. The N.T. church will always have its one and only sacrifice (the Lamb of God).

It shall always have its sanctuary in the heavens and its Eternal High Priest. Of course it may suffer trial and tribulation in the physical sense here on earth, but it shall always enjoy the favor of God. The cup of staggering is taken from the hand of God's true Israel by the atoning death of the Servant. He became a "curse for us" (cf. Gal. 3:10-14), and delivered all who submitted to the rule of God in Christ from the wrath of God that is to come upon the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-22). The cup of staggering is put into the hand of "Babylon" (humanity opposed to God) and it shall reel and fall under the wrath of God (Rev. 16:19; 17:6; 18:4-8). God will accomplish all this through the Suffering Servant and for the new Zion (the N.T. church and the O.T. saints who believed which form the one great Mt. Zion pictured in Heb. 11:22-29). And thus we approach the climactic chapter of Isaiah's entire work—chapter 53—the Suffering Servant. But first the transition-chapter, chapter 52. Actually, 52:1-12 serves as the transition from generalities concerning the Servant to particulars, and 52:13—53:12 detail the specifics concerning the Servant.

The Babylonians "afflicted" the *souls* as well as the bodies of the Jewish exiles. They humiliated them, taunting them about the whereabouts of their God, Jehovah; they took their sacred vessels and priests and desecrated them in their pagan country; they forced many of them to perform pagan, idolatrous rituals. They were tortured psychologically as well as being punished physically. We should probably understand the commanded "bow down" as figurative. However, certain Assyrian monuments show vanquished prisoners literally bowing down or lying down on the ground while the conquerors walked on their bodies.

QUIZ

1. How does the "cup of staggering" relate to the coming messianic age?

2. What would "stagger" Zion the most?
3. What is Zion to learn from this?
4. What does the word "therefore" in verse 21 indicate?
5. Give the two possible interpretations of "thou shalt no more drink it again."
6. Were the people of Jerusalem literally "walked" on?

4. EVANGELIZE, CHAPTER 52

a. REDEMPTION

TEXT: 52:1-6

- 1 Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.
- 2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit on thy throne, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bonds of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.
- 3 For thus saith Jehovah, Ye were sold for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.
- 4 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there: and the Assyrian hath oppressed them without cause.
- 5 Now therefore, what do I here, saith Jehovah, seeing that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them do howl, saith Jehovah, and my name continually all the day is blasphemed.
- 6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.